

Vicky Davis

From: News@JobDestruction.info
Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2009 12:32 AM
To:
Subject: Italians, not Texans, building Dallas bridge

<<<<< JOB DESTRUCTION NEWSLETTER No. 2079 -- 11/24/2009 >>>>>

As you might have noticed by now, most of the newsletters lately have been posted on the Vdare blog site. They are better to read on the web because they are formatted as regular web pages as opposed to the straight ASCII text that is used for the email version.

My most recent article made it to their front page.

The text from the articles are included here. That's to make sure they are archived and that researchers can search for keywords all in one file.

You can see it on the front page of Vdare for several days.

<http://www.vdare.com/>

After that go their author archive page:

<http://www.vdare.com/sanchez/index.htm>

Italian Welders Work On Dallas Bridge -- Texans Remain Jobless, By Rob Sanchez

The Trinity River Corridor Project, a major Dallas, Texas construction project to build bridges over the Trinity River, is an example of what can go wrong for American workers when work is outsourced to foreign-owned companies.

ARCHIVED ARTICLES

http://www.txcn.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/tv/stories/wfaa091105_wz_calatrava.2881028d3.html

Italians, not Texans, building signature Dallas bridge

<http://www.khou.com/news/local/Workers-complain-that-immigrants-use-B-1-visas-to-steal-American-jobs-70594292.html>

Workers complain that immigrants use B-1 visas to steal American jobs

<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/kera/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1573231/North.Texas/First.Dallas.Signature.Bridge.Could.Initially.Go.Nowhere>
First Dallas Signature Bridge Could Initially Go Nowhere

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/060906dnmetcalatrava.214a2c3b.html>

Trinity bridge bids far exceed budget

<http://www.wfaa.com/news/local/64503157.html>

Steel delay latest setback for Trinity River bridge

http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/unfairpark/2008/08/the_citys_decision_to_strike.php

Cimolai: Italian For "Keep Waiting"

http://texas.construction.com/features/archive/0709_feature2.asp

Calmer Waters for Trinity Bridges

Dallas Calatrava Bridge Overcomes Delays, Design Changes

<http://blog.vdare.com/archives/2009/11/04/indias-business-visa-crackdown/>

India s Business Visa Crackdown

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http://www.txcn.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/tv/stories/wfaa091105_wz_calatrava.2881028d3.html

Italians, not Texans, building signature Dallas bridge

<http://www.txcn.com/video/?nvid=411470>

video report

01:28 PM CST on Thursday, November 5, 2009

By BYRON HARRIS / WFAA-TV

DALLAS -- Seventy million dollars worth of federal, state and city funds are pouring into the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.

Supporters hope the span will be a signature for the city. But it may be remembered for something else, because the key jobs in its construction -- tens of thousands of man hours of work -- are going to Italians.

On the construction site in the Trinity River bottoms, an American inspector told News 8: "If you don't speak Italian, it's going to be tough to communicate."

In broken English, a man who appeared to be a foreman, told me all the welders and helpers on the project -- eleven in all -- are from Italy.

The Texas Department of Transportation is buying the bridge. The steel comes from Italian company Cimolai. Cimolai imported the workers to build the span without giving Texans a chance at the jobs, which would have been required under H-2B visas, the kind specified for construction jobs.

When asked what kind of visas he and his colleagues had, the foreman in charge of the project said they had "visa for work (sic)."

Documents show the eleven men came in not as construction workers but "business visitors" on B-1 visas.

State Department rules do allow commercial or industrial workers to enter the U.S. under B-1 visas. They are permitted to enter the U.S. to "install, service, or repair commercial or industrial equipment or machinery."

The rules specifically exclude construction such as bridge-building.

TxDOT spokeswoman Cynthia Northrup White said her agency inquired about the legality of the visas "months ago" and found no problem.

The document Northrup White uses to defend the agency's position is an

October 5 letter from Houston immigration attorney Beatriz Trillos Ballerini. The letter is not addressed to TxDOT, but rather to the Italian firm Cimolai, which presumably paid for her opinion.

Ballerini said the B-1 visas are "in full accordance with the federal regulations and the Foreign Affairs Manual." Ballerini cites section 9FAM 41.31N10.1 of the Foreign Affairs Manual, which lets workers use B-1 visas to "install equipment purchased from a company outside the United States."

She does not mention the part of the regulations that say the visas are not to be used for construction.

Ballerini did not return News 8's phone calls seeking clarification of her analysis.

Immigration lawyers commonly find parts of the law that fit their clients' needs to justify importing workers, while excluding parts of the law that do not.

An exhaustive News 8 investigation of aircraft mechanics found repair firms importing foreign mechanics as "scientific technicians" and "aircraft repair engineers" to fit certain sections of immigration law, when what the workers were really doing was fixing airplanes.

So it is with the Calatrava bridge.

Immigration lawyer Ballerini writes that "only highly-trained individuals screened for this project possess the specialized knowledge of Cimolai S.p.A distinctive on-site installation technique, including preparation, unique welding procedures, assembly and appropriate lifting."

This is news to Williams Brothers Construction Company, the general contractor for the bridge.

We asked company spokesman Bill Miller if Italian welders are any different than American welders. "Presumably no," he chuckled. "Nothing that I can name."

TxDOT officials admit that the Italian workers actually welded the wrong ends of two sections of the bridge together.

"They turned one of the boxes [a massive piece of support steel on the bottom of the structure] around the wrong way," TxDOT inspector Stan Ybarra told News 8. "That happens. They re only human."

All of this, however, is no joke for unemployed welders in North Texas, who might have been working on Dallas' signature bridge.

"We feel like we have American citizens being cheated out of work -- not only from the bridge, but all over by these visas," said Steve Anthony of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers. He says he could put 50 welders to work today.

Although the bridge is a signature project for Dallas, Mayor Tom Leppert said the lost jobs are not the city's problem. "That one's being run by TxDOT, so TxDOT's going to have to be the one to do the fact check, the analysis, all of those sorts of things; they're going to have to be approached."

Everyone involved in this project points the finger at someone else.

The U.S. consulate in Milan, Italy approved the visas to "install" the bridge.

TxDOT -- citing Ballerini's letter to someone else -- says it is the responsibility of the general contractor to make sure the law is followed.

Williams Brothers Construction passes the buck to Cimolai.

Cimolai doesn't speak English.

And the jobless Texas welders trying to find a way to put dinner on the table tonight don't have anyone to plead their case.

E-mail bharris@wfaa.com

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<http://www.khou.com/news/local/Workers-complain-that-immigrants-use-B-1-visa-s-to-steal-American-jobs-70594292.html>

Workers complain that immigrants use B-1 visas to steal American jobs

by Jeff McShan / 11 News

Posted on November 19, 2009 at 11:48 PM

Updated yesterday at 6:43 AM

HOUSTON -- Work is under way in Dallas on a unique bridge, and supporters there hope it will be a signature for the city. The Margaret Hunt Hill bridge project, designed by a Spanish architect, is expensive. In fact, \$70 million worth of taxpayer's money is being spent to connect two sides of the Trinity River.

And like most big construction projects, there is controversy. Workers are wondering who will -- or should -- get the job.

"Well the City of Dallas just laid off 900 employees last week and I am pretty sure there are thousands and thousands of people unemployed, and part of their tax money is going to the bridge and none of it is staying here. It is going to the Italians," said Joe Hall, Dallas Building Trades Council.

The steel for the bridge comes from an Italian company, Cimolai. The company brought its own workers here to build the bridge, without giving Texans a chance at the jobs. It is a process that is required by law, but rarely enforced.

Immigrant workers are taking jobs away from Americans in Dallas, here in Houston, and all across the nation. So what's going on here? Well, it all has to do with work visas.

The U.S. Government offers more than two dozen types of guest worker visas, and because there are so many loopholes in the system, some say it is rampant with fraud.

In Dallas, the Italians are using what's called B-1 visas to work on the bridge. They were handled by Houston immigration attorney Beatriz Trillos Ballerini.

The State Department says with B-1 visas, immigrants are permitted to come to America to install, service or repair commercial or industrial equipment or machinery.

These visas don't allow immigrants to work on construction jobs, like building a bridge.

"The attorney assured us that all applicable federal regulations were being followed," said TXDoT spokesperson Cynthia Northrop White.

In a letter addressed to Cimolai, Ballerini said the B-1 visas are "in full

accordance with the federal regulations and the Foreign Affairs Manual."

There was no mention that the visas are not to be used for construction jobs. And Ballerini did not return our calls for an explanation.

"This just scratches the surface of what's really going on. And we're still finding stuff out every day," said Joe Hall.

Before jobs can be awarded to immigrants here in Texas, the employers must notify the Workforce Commission so it can post the positions, giving Americans the first chance.

But there are all kinds of ways to get around that too, said Michael Cunningham with the AFLCIO.

"We have a lot of American workers who could be using this work right now, especially with the high unemployment in construction which is probably around 20 percent in this state," he said.

Cunningham said the general contractors are also to blame.

"I think they don't want to admit it to themselves. I think they know what's going on out there. They want a cheap labor supply," he said.

Although he wouldn't give us any specific information, Cunningham said there is a federal criminal investigation under way involving immigrants working with guest worker visas along the Houston Ship Channel.

And then there's a security issue. The U.S. government hasn't been able to keep up with all the immigrants whose work visas have expired.

"Right now I don't think there is any policing making them go home," said Cunningham.

And what about the Dallas bridge under construction?

"Had we known there would be foreign workers we wouldn't have supported this bridge at all," said Joe Hall.

The bridge is being built by Italians, while some qualified Americans say they are sitting at home wondering how they're going to keep their lights on.

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<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/keram/news.newsmain/article/1/0/1573231/North.Texas/First.Dallas.Signature.Bridge.Could.Initially.Go.Nowhere>

First Dallas Signature Bridge Could Initially Go Nowhere
BJ Austin, KERA News (2009-11-03)
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DALLAS, TX (KERA) -

A "bridge to nowhere" that's what one Council member is calling Dallas' first designer bridge over the Trinity River. KERA's BJ Austin has more on the issue and the technology that may help put the pieces together.

The problem is a deep layer of "sand" discovered in March. It was discovered when the concrete pilings for the bridge access ramps were drilled into the levees. That's a problem for the Corps of Engineers, which is in charge of flood protection. Pliable sand around the pilings could create a "soft spot" that would allow water to seep through the earthen levees - weakening them.

So the Corps ordered a halt to work within 50 feet of the levees until the

extent of the "sand" problem is determined, and the levees are reinforced, if necessary.

Dallas City Council member Angela Hunt worries we could have a 120 million dollar signature bridge that no one can cross.

Hunt: I think that for some period of time, and I don't know what it will be, it will be in fact a bridge to nowhere. Again, my primary concern is now much will it cost to connect this bridge to nowhere through our levees.

Trinity River Corridor Project Director Rebecca Dugger is confident the ramps will be built. She says welding work on the steel frame of the Calatrava bridge continues, and the first section could be hoisted in place well before the ramps are completed.

Dugger: It could actually go up separately. They don't necessarily depend on one another as they're going along. So, they're kind of moving along parallel. I'm thinking later this year we should be able to start seeing the arch going up.

That's the eye-popping 40-story Calatrava arch from which a web of supporting cables stretch and descend.

The Texas Department of Transportation - building the access ramps -- expects cost increases because of delays any levee "fix" that may be ordered. How much, officials won't say. But an often-mentioned remedy is a concrete, or diaphragm wall built down to bedrock to block any water flow. Based on city of Dallas estimates, the cost of a diaphragm wall could be 9 or 10 thousand dollars a foot.

TxDot has hired University of Texas at Arlington Engineer Dr. Sahadat Hossain to use a new technology that can determine the extent of sand in the levees - starting at the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge.

Hossain: We'll look at what is the impact of this construction on the levee or if there is any impact. Then the second part of our work will be how to remediate this so there will be no problem in the future of the levee.

Dr. Hossain and the U-T-A team will use an imaging technology new to North Texas.

R-I, or resistivity imaging, allows engineers to look at continuous segments of the inside of the levee to determine its composition. The machines are a little bigger than a car battery. Technicians place a number of steel rods about two inches into the levee. These electrodes are attached to each other and the series of R-I machines. The electrical current then creates the data that allows engineers to identify the types of soil inside the levee.

Dr. Hossain says this resistivity technology is used routinely in Europe, but not in the U.S., and he says it's more accurate and faster than boring hundreds of holes to take samples.

The speed of new and accurate information is important to Councilman Dave Neumann, chairman of the Trinity Corridor Project committee. He says, even with TxDot's delay on the ramps, he expects the project's deadline to be met.

Neumann: 2011 we'll be driving across the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, absolutely.

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http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/latestnews/stories/060906dnme_tcalatrava.214a2c3b.html

Trinity bridge bids far exceed budget

Dallas: City refuses to go over, will ask Calatrava for scaled-back design

08:22 PM CDT on Thursday, June 8, 2006

By EMILY RAMSHAW / The Dallas Morning News

Construction bids for the first of three skyscraping bridges planned to span the Trinity River came in at twice the budgeted price Thursday, leaving Dallas officials with two options: raise the extra funds or go back to the drawing board.

Dismayed city officials said Thursday evening that they would not break the bank, and instead would ask the bridge's designer -- world-renowned architect Santiago Calatrava -- to make major, cost-saving revisions.

The earliest a redesigned Woodall Rodgers bridge bid could be awarded is December, officials said. If Mr. Calatrava wants to start from scratch, it could take much longer.

"We're going to build a bridge, a Calatrava bridge. But we're not going to spend any more money than we've got to build it," City Manager Mary Suhm said. "We have a contract with Calatrava that says he will design a bridge for our available resources. If this bridge doesn't meet our budget, he'll redesign it."

Mr. Calatrava, along with city consultants, originally estimated the 1,800-foot Woodall Rodgers "signature" span would cost up to \$57 million. The lowest of three bids unsealed by the Texas Department of Transportation on Thursday was \$113 million.

"Obviously I'm very disappointed that the bids came in this high," Mayor Laura Miller said. "If it was \$60 or \$65 million, we could've handled it. [Mr. Calatrava] will have to give us a new design that is within our budget, at his own cost."

Experts blame the difference and the relatively low number of bids on soaring prices for steel, concrete and fuel, as well as the risks associated with building a one-of-a-kind architectural feat.

Others say Mr. Calatrava has a reputation for breaking budgets. The Milwaukee art museum he designed ended up costing nearly four times its original estimate. A footbridge for Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Redding, Calif., came in almost 70 percent over budget, according to local media reports.

And some advocates of the downtown parks project fear the unexpected costs could jeopardize construction of a second planned Calatrava bridge at Interstate 30 and foil plans for a third Interstate 35E bridge altogether.

A spokeswoman for Mr. Calatrava said the architect was in meetings and couldn't be reached for comment. But Dallas officials were quick to say they don't blame him for the cost overrun.
Disappointed officials

When Mr. Calatrava's firm and city consultants came up with their most recent price estimate in the fall of 2005, they tried to take rising steel prices into account, Trinity River Project Director Rebecca Dugger said. Mr. Calatrava made cost-saving changes to the Woodall Rodgers and I-30 bridges, including replacing steel decks with concrete decks, and welded connections with bolts. The I-35E bridge -- the third and costliest -- has not yet been designed or funded.

The soaring costs reflected in the low bid didn't come as a complete shock to Dallas officials. In March, a high-ranking individual close to the

project told The Dallas Morning News that Dallas would never get a \$57 million bid. The official said the city would be lucky to get one between \$75 million and \$85 million and that it would probably be closer to \$100 million.

The \$113 million bid came from Williams Bros. Construction out of Houston. Evansville, Ind.-based Traylor Bros. and Austin Bridge and Road bid \$122 million and \$133 million, respectively.

Ms. Dugger said she was very disappointed with the bids. She said it's unclear how much Mr. Calatrava would need to change -- somewhere between minor tweaks and a complete overhaul.

Such changes could include scaling down the project's height "from 400 feet to 300, or even 250," Ms. Dugger said, and making it less complex.

"I love this design, and I hate to think we're going to have to get away from it," she said. "I thought it was going to be somewhere closer to what we estimated."

Rising costs

It's a trend Ken Simonson, chief economist for the Associated General Contractors of America, sees every day: government agencies struggling with broken budgets in their construction projects.

The reason? Steel costs spiked by about 50 percent in 2004 and haven't fallen much since. Concrete costs have been rising at double-digit rates for a couple of years. And mounting diesel fuel and asphalt prices have compounded the problem.

But there's another factor in projects like this one, Mr. Simonson said -- an eye-catching and highly challenging design.

"As contractors look at what they are being called on to do, they may have quite a different idea about time and equipment than the architect, who doesn't actually do the building," Mr. Simonson said.

State transportation officials agreed that the Calatrava project has had a high profile. But there's been concern because Mr. Calatrava's designs use techniques and materials many local contractors haven't worked with before.

Steve Owen, a spokesman for Traylor Bros., wouldn't speak specifically about the construction company's \$122 million bid. But he acknowledged that the complexity of the project could have bumped up the estimate.

"It's been a tough couple of years trying to predict and anticipate what a project is likely to cost," he said. "When you have a very unique design that is exciting and interesting ... that can sometimes impact the pricing."

'Bumpy ride' ahead

Ms. Suhm said she and other city officials would spend the next three weeks checking the bids to see exactly what factors drove up the price. Originally, a contract was to be awarded later this month. Now, the bids opened Thursday will likely be rejected.

"This is an issue all contracting people are dealing with," Ms. Suhm said. "Even the cost of doing a plain-Jane TxDOT bridge has gone up 35 or 40 percent."

The \$57 million set aside for construction of the Woodall Rodgers bridge includes \$28 million from the city's 1998 bond program, a \$12 million donation from Hunt Petroleum and \$8 million from federal transportation appropriations. The remaining \$9 million comes from a combination of state and regional grants and other contributions.

Trinity Trust Foundation President Gail Thomas said she had remained optimistic about the cost -- until she got word of the bids.

"I just said, 'Oh my goodness. Whoa. This is going to be a bumpy ride,' " Ms. Thomas said. "But we're committed, and we're going to build this bridge."

She said raising more private dollars to meet the new price tag is out of the question, and going back to the drawing board is the only solution. And she vowed that the city would still get two Calatrava bridges -- though most officials agree the fate of the third is up in the air.

"I'm not worried; we'll just go back for redesign," she said of the Woodall Rodgers bridge. "I think Santiago Calatrava is a genius, and anything he pulls out will be fabulous."

E-mail eramshaw@dallasnews.com

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<http://www.wfaa.com/news/local/64503157.html>

Steel delay latest setback for Trinity River bridge

by By RUDOLPH BUSH / The Dallas Morning News rbush@dallasnews.com

Posted on August 15, 2009 at 3:44 PM

Updated Friday, Oct 16 at 10:15 AM

Related:

* Italians, not Texans, building signature Dallas bridge

Dallas officials have long hoped to see a signature bridge over the Trinity River rise as a new icon of the city's skyline.

Now they will have to wait a little longer after word came last week that an Italian company is 10 months behind schedule on delivering steel to construct the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge between the Woodall Rodgers Freeway and Singleton Boulevard.

In a memo written to City Manager Mary Suhm on Wednesday but released publicly Monday, a top Texas Department of Transportation official explained that completion of major elements of the Santiago Calatrava-designed bridge - including its main expanse and towering arch - won't be completed in May 2010 as scheduled.

Instead, those portions of the bridge will be completed in March 2011, at the same time approach ramps to the bridge are scheduled to be finished.

"The thing I'm happy about is it does not affect the opening of the bridge" to traffic, said Bill Hale, TxDOT's chief engineer for the Dallas district.

The delay also won't change the price of the project for taxpayers, he said. The project was bid long ago, and price increases will be borne by its contractors.

Construction of the bridge and its approach ramps was bid at just under \$117 million, including \$69.7 million for the bridge itself and \$47 million for the ramps.

Mr. Hale acknowledged that the setback is frustrating for those who see the bridge as a key milestone of the Trinity River Project.

"I know the city and everybody else wanted to see this bridge rising out of the ground," he said.

Indeed, city officials have been so eager to watch the bridge rise that Dallas' official Web site has 24-hour streaming video of the construction site. Mayor Tom Leppert, who has made the Trinity project a key part of his administration, called news of the delay upsetting.

"Clearly, you don't want delays on anything. It's an important part of the [Trinity] project, and we want to get it done," he said.

Around City Hall, and across Dallas, many have invested a great deal of hope in the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge.

Council member Dave Neumann, who heads the council's Trinity River Project committee, promised earlier this year that the bridge alone "will initiate an economic renewal that is long overdue" in West Dallas.

But the bridge is seen not only as an important physical span across the river. Its form has become emblematic of the city reaching for some great symbol of itself.

Its costs have been justified with explanations that it will forever be connected to Dallas in people's minds.

Asked whether the delay was reasonable, Mr. Leppert, a former top construction executive, simply raised his eyebrows and called it frustrating.

Yet, such delays are nothing new to the Margaret Hunt Hill span, one of three Calatrava-designed bridges the city wants to build over the Trinity. Funding for a second bridge at Interstate 30 has been secured, while the fate of a third bridge at Interstate 35E remains unclear.

Largely because of its pricey and shifting design, along with the cost of fabricating steel to build it, the Woodall Rodgers project has undergone setback after setback.

When it was originally conceived in the late 1990s, officials hoped to see the bridge open by 2005, said Rebecca Dugger, director of the Trinity River project.

But Mr. Calatrava's original design simply cost too much to build. A new design also had to undergo several drafts to keep costs down.

The project's general contractor, Williams Brothers Construction, worked to keep steel costs down by negotiating with the Italian fabricator Cimolai.

Those negotiations were complicated under American law, which requires that bids on U.S. projects by foreign steel fabricators must be at least 25 percent less than U.S. fabricators.

It was also complicated for the American firm to craft specifics of the deal with the Italian company, Mr. Hale said. Negotiations over a performance bond, a standard practice in the U.S., delayed finalizing the deal for months, he said.

The latest delay struck a familiar chord in today's market - problems with getting steel. But the specific problem in this case had little to do with increased international demand.

Instead, Cimolai had difficulty creating a model of Mr. Calatrava's design.

Expected to take one month, the model took four months to complete, Mr. Hale said.

By the time it was done, Cimolai was fabricating steel for another project, and Dallas' bridge had to be pushed back.

Kenneth Simonson, chief economist for the Associated General Contractors of America, said that while a 10-month delay in fabrication is highly unusual, fabrication capacity is limited internationally.

Mr. Hale said that he is hopeful the setback won't stretch the full 10 months and that delayed elements of the bridge will be finished earlier than March 2011.

Council member Angela Hunt, who has studied the Trinity project and was the key opponent of constructing a toll road inside the river's levees, said she has little confidence that will happen.

"I worry that residents who see these additional delays will become even more frustrated and disenchanted with the project," she said.

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http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/unfairpark/2008/08/the_citys_decision_to_strike.php

Cimolai: Italian For "Keep Waiting"

By Sam Merten in News You Can Actually Use, Actually
Monday, Aug. 25 2008 @ 2:00PM

The city's decision to strike a deal with Cimolai, an Italian steel manufacturer, to save a few bucks while building the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge is what led to a possible 10-month delay in the project. Apparently, the deal was so sweet that Cimolai is having "difficultly finding the financial resources to complete the project," according to Texas Department of Transportation spokeswoman Kelli Petras.

Petras tells Unfair Park that Bill Hale, TxDOT's chief engineer for the Dallas district, cited funding as one of the main issues noted in letter from Cimolai, in which the manufacturer informed TxDOT it was running behind on the fabrication of steel and could not meet the deadline in the contract between the two parties. Rising construction costs and foreign currencies also play into the financial picture, Petras says, which caused TxDOT to move the estimated time of the bridge's completion from May 2010 to March 2011.

However, Petras calls the 10-month delay "a very conservative estimate" and "the worst-case scenario." She also notes that it is only a delay on the aesthetic elements that were scheduled for completion before the bridge would be open for traffic, which remains March 2011. "Even if the bridge were able to be built by the time specified, it would still just be a bridge sitting there without being tied into anything," Petras tells Unfair Park. "So [the delay] really doesn't affect the traveling public."

Petras also assured us that the contracts between TxDOT and Cimolai are "set in stone" and any money problems are "an issue that they are going to have to work out."

Council member Angela Hunt, who reminds Unfair Park that she had reservations about spending city funds on an iconic bridge, says she received information about the delay only this morning and wasn't told specifically why the bridge construction was delayed. She says the delay is disappointing news to those looking forward to the bridge gracing Dallas' skyline.

"This bridge delay is a continuation of the many delays that we've seen on this project," she says. "I think that becomes very disheartening and frustrating to residents when they see important parts of this project delayed."

Hunt and her council colleagues are meeting about the budget today at City Hall, and you can catch council members Hunt (Frontiers of Flight Museum, 6911 Lemmon Ave., 6:30 p.m.), Caraway, Neumann and Koop at budget town hall meetings tonight. Mayor Tom is scheduled to make an appearance at both Caraway's and Koop's meetings.

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http://texas.construction.com/features/archive/0709_feature2.asp

Feature Story - September 2007

Calmer Waters for Trinity Bridges

Dallas Calatrava Bridge Overcomes Delays, Design Changes

Texas downpours further postponed work on the future highway bridge designed by Santiago Calatrava, but work is finally ramping up on the first of three new bridges in Dallas.

By Annie Koo

Stalled four months last year for an extended bidding-redesign process, the \$69 million Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, the first of three planned bridges in Dallas s Trinity River Corridor Project, is seeing still more delays. This year, blame it on the rain. Crews were delayed a week for rain and on the site just one day in June before more than a month of downpours postponed further work on the design by Santiago Calatrava.

Calatrava

Value engineering reduced the original cost of the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge. World-renowned architect Santiago Calatrava designed the first of the three Trinity River Bridges in Dallas, now under way.

"The unseasonably wet conditions have been a big issue," says Rebecca Dugger, director of the Trinity River Corridor Project, the umbrella development that oversees the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge. She says crews should start drilling piers once the site drains.

Even before the bridge broke ground in December 2005, problems beset the project. As designs were being finalized, says Dugger, one of the site s outfalls had to be physically relocated since it was in the path for the center pier of the bridge. Like the Trinity River s levee embankment, these outfalls provide flood protection to the corridor.

But perhaps the most substantive delay was the extended bidding-redesign process that began in June 2006. Houston-based Williams Brothers Construction Co. Inc. s winning bid came in at \$113 million, nearly double Calatrava s original \$57-million estimate. The budget blow sent both architect and city consultants back to the drawing table until October, when Williams Brothers., the sole bidder in the second round, won again for \$69 million.

Dugger says the price cut was based on value engineering. For instance, the center arch, originally cast to have a heptagonal cross-section, was redesigned as a cylinder. The bridge piers were also tapered into cylinders, down from their teardrop shape.

"Simplified shapes made for simplified fabrication, which brought costs down," Dugger adds.

Other adjustments were made, such as replacing a steel drainpipe for a PVC one and using several smaller support beams rather than a few larger ones.

advertisement
Williams Brothers price drop could also be attributed to the use of foreign steel, says Enrique Guillen, Central Dallas Area Office project

engineer of the Texas Department of Transportation. Buy America regulations typically oblige federally funded projects to use domestic materials. However, says Guillen, Williams Brothers vied for a duplicate bidding process, a means to waive the regulation if the bid using foreign steel comes in at least 25% less than the domestic steel version.

Criteria met, Williams Brothers foreign steel fabrication will begin in the fall by Cimolai Costruzioni Metalliche of Pordenone, Italy.

Barring other delays, the cable-stayed bridge should be completed by October 2009. Its design calls for a 395-ft-tall central parabolic steel arch, Guillen says. Fan-like cables reeling off this span support the deck that sits on a combination spread-footer and drill-shaft foundation. The foundation caps are stabilized by 32 54-in. drill shafts that reach 90 ft into the ground, he says. The bridge will have three lanes in each direction for vehicular traffic.

The Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, a private donor name change from the original Woodall Rodgers Freeway Extension, will provide direct freeway access to downtown. The site's only current but rarely trafficked roadway, the Continental Avenue Viaduct, which does not have access to freeways, will become a pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfare according to Dugger.

The bridge is one of three in the master plan of the Trinity River Corridor Project, a development to revitalize the desolate floodplain that divides West Dallas and Oakcliff from the downtown cityscape. Though the adjacent bridges are considered necessary for traffic relief, Dallas's choice for expensive, Santiago Calatrava-designed bridges was more a matter of branding the city with the architect's international acclaim.

"Construction was in the works regardless of whether they look pretty," insists Dugger, who says an infrastructural study from 1997 predates the \$69 million Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge.

The second bridge, also by Calatrava, is 65-90% designed, says Dugger, who expects to see initial plans by the end of the year. It will widen and replace the existing IH-30 bridge, which, unlike the Continental Avenue Viaduct, is heavily used and poses more difficult traffic issues.

An initial proposal to open a temporary reversible high-occupancy-vehicle lane on the existing IH-30 bridge to reroute traffic during the second bridge's construction was criticized by TxDOT, which did not want a throwaway structure. Dugger says another option might be to build the Calatrava replacement in segments around the existing bridge, preserving normal traffic flow during the bulk of construction, until the pieces need to be set in place.

"We could potentially do it over a weekend," Dugger says. She cites Calatrava's Olympic Velodrome built for Athens in 2004, which was assembled in less than five days under this method.

Just southeast of the IH-30 span, a third bridge is intended to replace and increase capacity on the 50-year-old IH-35 bridge, though neither funding nor substantial planning is under way.

Key Players:

Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge

Owner: Texas Department of Transportation, Dallas Area District

Architect: Santiago Calatrava LLC, New York

GC: Williams Brothers Construction Co., Houston

Structural Engineer: Huitt-Zollars Inc., Dallas

Civil Engineer: Chiang, Patel, & Yerby Inc., Dallas

Useful Sources:

For additional information on the entire Trinity River Corridor Project or to find the latest construction updates on the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, visit:

City of Dallas Trinity River Corridor Project
<http://www.trinityrivercorridor.org>

Woodall Rodgers Extension, Project Pegasus, Dallas
<http://www.projectpegasus.org/wre.htm>

The Trinity Trust
<http://www.thetrinitytrust.org/>

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<http://blog.vdare.com/archives/2009/11/04/indias-business-visa-crackdown/>

India s Business Visa Crackdown

Posted By Rob Sanchez On 4 November 2009 @ 2:12 In General | Comments Disabled

Lots of stories and speculations are circulating about India s crackdown on business visas. In many cases H-1B activists are incorrectly concluding that this is an example of India s restrictive policies on employment visas, and then drawing parallels to our generous H-1B program. A closer examination of India s nonimmigrant visa programs indicates that the current issue has more to do with illegal immigration of Chinese into India.

The controversy in India began when violence broke out between Chinese contractors working in India and Indian nationalists who believe they should get the jobs. Some of the media in India are referring to the incidents as "xenophobic altercations" where mobs of Indian locals attacked Chinese workers.

The best description I have read about what occurred is in OutlookIndia.

Many of the Chinese came into India with fraudulent business visas. They were able to get away with it because India has been very lax in enforcing the rules (sound familiar?). In order to fix the problem the Indian Ministry took the very draconian step of ordering every foreigner on business visas to go back to their home country to reapply for the visa. All foreigners, including Americans, Russians, and Chinese must follow this procedure.

Paradoxically the Indians aren t complaining that the Chinese illegal aliens make too much money " instead they complain that the Chinese workers are making too much! Indian locals claim that the Chinese work in luxurious work compounds and that domestic workers get Rs 87 a day compared to Chinese co-workers who get up to Rs 1,700 a day. That s quite a pay disparity!

According to the OutlookIndia article, Indian locals say that, "hordes of unskilled/semi-skilled imports from China are taking jobs from the unemployed Indian." One estimate put the total number of skilled and unskilled workers in India at around 25,000. To keep things in perspective, the United States allows about 125,000 foreign workers into the U.S. each month, and 1.5 million every year. Currently there are about 800,000 H-1Bs in the U.S.

So, India with a population four times bigger than that of the U.S. complains about a foreign worker population that is about .002% of its total population, compared to the U.S. who allows about 0.5% of its population to enter its country every year. Put another way, the U.S. is

more than 250 times more tolerant to foreign workers as a percentage of its population than India (I say "more than 250?" since mobs of angry Americans haven't attacked H-1Bs yet).

Many people are coming to false conclusions about the fiasco in India because they are confusing business visas with employment visas. This is a description of the two visas according to the Indian Consulate in San Francisco:

BUSINESS VISA:

Valid for 6 months/one year with multiple entries. A letter (on company letterhead) from Sponsoring Organization indicating the nature of applicant's business, probable duration of stay, places and organizations to be visited incorporating therein a guarantee to meet maintenance expenses, etc. should accompany the application. ii) Long term Business Visa for ten years (multiple entries) in case of US Citizens and five years (multiple entries) for other nationals are available only to those who have set up industrial/business joint ventures in India. This fact, along with the details of joint venture in India must be mentioned in the sponsorship letter.

EMPLOYMENT VISA:

Employment Visa are initially issued for one year stay subject to fulfillment of certain conditions. This can be extended by Foreigners Regional Registration Office in India, if the job contract continues. Spouses and children will get coterminus Visa.

India's visa system has similarities with the U.S. but making direct comparisons is tricky to do. The business visa closely resembles our B-1 visa. It's interesting to note that India's business visa is very short term for all workers unless they are there to set up outsourcing facilities. They give special preference to "US citizens", which makes sense since this nation seems to be so eager to move industries to India.

The employment visa is similar to our entire H visa program (H-1B, H-2B, etc.) but keep in mind that very few foreign workers are given that visa in comparison to the much more generous U.S. nonimmigrant system.

So, now that we understand the visas, let's get back to the Chinese problem in India.

The Chinese are causing big problems in India because so many of the workers came from China illegally "they are in complete violation of Indian visa guidelines. The Chinese should have applied for employment visas but they didn't because most of them would have been denied. The Chinese knew the employment visas wouldn't be granted so they gamed the system by using business visas. This is not unlike some of the B visa scandals that have occurred in the U.S. (like the car workers from Poland) with one major difference "Indians aren't going to put up with it any longer.

The Outlook India article raises an interesting question, and the answer may be considered very nationalistic by our standards. Personally I think Rajan makes a point that's just as true in the U.S. as it is in India.

This brings up the hotly contested question: are all Chinese workers here "engineers" and "technicians" with skills irreplaceable by Indians? Speaking at a meet in China, Indian ambassador S. Jaishankar said he couldn't recall any projects requiring "such large manpower support from home" and urged the Chinese to think of an "India-specific approach".

But is international labour mobility something to be shunned? Not at the cost of resentment at home, says Rajan. "At no point should the locals feel that outsiders are taking away their jobs," he says.

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